

2010-18

>>> <judggy@charter.net> 10/27/2010 2:20 PM >>>

Dear Clerk:

As a member of the State Bar of Michigan, I am e-mailing you to comment on ADM File No. 2010-18, published for comment in the Bar Journal. I have no problem or issue with Alternative A, and between the two alternatives, if there is to be a change from the current rule, support that alternative.

On the other hand, Alternative B is of concern and objectionable. It appears to be a complex and convoluted attempt to micromanage attorneys' pro bono contributions, which should continue to be a matter of personal responsibility and conscience in its details. I completely agree with the concurring opinions of three Justices as published, for the reasons stated by them.

In particular, Alternative B in subparagraph (a) recommends that members should contribute 30 hours or \$300 per year (which is O.K. up to that point), but then, by use of the word "AND" (emphasis added), ALSO contribute some unspecified "additional services through" the persons, groups, and/or activities listed in subparagraph (b). While the proposed title makes clear that this would continue to be voluntary, and the comments clarify to some extent that there can be exceptions, this appears to be an increase in recommended pro bono contributions for all members. Further, contributions via service to such things as civil rights groups would be part of the "additional services" recommended AFTER 30 hours or \$300. A member such as myself who contributes over 500 hours of pro bono work per year, most of it to a 501C3 charitable non-profit civil rights group, apparently could not credit any of that time to the 30 hours, because civil rights groups fall under (b) and not (a). This appears to be an attempt to tell me that I am recommended to also donate 30 hours per year to a specific type of organization, one that is "designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means", even though I am not in law practice and have no qualification to perform any of that kind of law, on top of the hundreds of hours I already contribute to the 501c3 non-profit corporation. (And, no, since I have NO income, because of all the volunteer work I do, I am unable financially to donate any money).

I assert that while I am able to interpret Alternative B in a way that grandfathered in my current level of pro bono work, I have learned that other peoples' "interpretations" in the legal field are most often far afield, baseless and wild. I wouldn't want Alternative B to become engrained, and maybe some day form the basis for some mandatory standard that can in fact be used as a basis of discipline, as interpreted by future persons serving on some entity such as the State Bar of Supreme Court.

Sincerely,
Thomas B. North
P33880
St. Ignace, MI
judggy@charter.net